

VIPs who drop names and default big time

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SHAH ALAM: VIPs and prominent businessmen who use the names of powerful people are responsible for up to 50% of the arrears owed to local authorities in Selangor.

State Housing and Local Government Committee chairman Datuk Mokhtar Dahalan said one such prominent individual owed the Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ) RM9mil in assessment arrears while another owed RM5mil.

He said the two alone were accountable for almost half of the total RM30mil owed to the council in arrears.

"The situation is similar in most of the local authorities where we face a lot of difficulty in collecting taxes and arrears from those sheltered by big guns.

"These people make it very difficult for the local authorities to recover the debts or take any form of enforcement action against them," he said yesterday at a press conference.

He was responding to the Prime Minister's criticism on Friday of some local authorities for their tardiness in collecting assessment.

Mokhtar said Dr Mahathir's statement was a blessing in disguise, which would enable local authorities to come down hard on these "sheltered" defaulters, who owed between 30% and 50% of the total arrears due.

According to him, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohamad Khir Toyo had expressed concern at the recent state executive council meeting over the large amount of taxes owed and urged local authorities to go after defaulters.

Since all the 12 local authorities were operating on deficit budgets, Mokhtar said the state government felt the situation could be reversed if the dues were collected.

"The local authorities are taking action on defaulters by sealing their movable properties or taking them to court.

"The Prime Minister's call has given us the added motivation to go after them," he said.

Mokhtar said he was unable to reveal the total amount owed to all the local authorities as he did not have the full details.

However, he said, Petaling Jaya Municipal Council and MPSJ topped the list with RM30mil each followed by Klang Municipal Council with RM20mil and Kajang Municipal Council with RM15mil.